

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN



CITY of NORTHAMPTON  
OFFICE of PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT  
and the  
NORTHAMPTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The basis of this report was a draft version prepared by Patrick McHale, an intern from the Conway School of Landscape Design. Subsequently, the draft was revised extensively by the Office of Planning & Development and the Northampton Historical Commission.

Northampton, Massachusetts  
January 1992

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION TO A COMMUNITY**

The preservation of historic resources within a community is essential for the vitality of its unique character. Each community has its own personality, composed of many individual parts. Historic properties are vitally important in establishing the character of a community, and play a crucial role in defining a sense of place. The individual threads composing the historic fabric of a community are non-renewable resources, running through time telling the community's story while enriching the present and future.

When lost through destruction or neglect, irreplaceable ties to the past are obliterated forever. Without a sense of history or connection with the past, an older community may trade its authentic character for anonymous new developments or a Disney-like imitation of Colonial or Victorian style.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Establishing effective historic preservation in Northampton will be complicated and a challenge to those involved in the process, but the results will be worth the effort. Northampton is a fascinating city, with valuable and wonderfully diverse historic resources.

**Within a two-mile radius of downtown Main street one can find:**

- Intact Plantation Period land divisions
- Two houses containing Plantation Period portions
- More than two dozen Colonial and Federal Period Homes
- The site of Shay's Rebellion
- Early and Late Industrial Period mill buildings and adjacent housing
- Three iron bridges that are a pioneering example of 19th century technology
- More than three hundred contiguous 19th century commercial, institutional, and public buildings
- Smith College - with numerous notable resources
- The former homes of Sojourner Truth and Calvin Coolidge
- Well preserved 19th century agricultural and designed pastoral landscapes
- And much more

Existing preservation planning and zoning regulations in Northampton allow for virtually **ANY** changes to all of the above historic resources, and to the numerous other historic treasures in the city.

Education is a proper starting point in gaining community awareness and support for historic preservation. Establishing local historic districts for the priority historic resources in the city is also imperative.

Northampton possesses a tapestry of rich and varied historical resources. Proper planning now will ensure that future residents of Northampton can continue to enjoy and benefit from this heritage.

## INTRODUCTION AND NATURE OF PROJECT

**Purpose of Study:** Production of a brief report for incorporation into the Strategic Plan for Northampton through study and use of existing materials. The Strategic Plan is the primary resource used by the Northampton Office of Planning and Development to guide growth in several areas: Land Use; Housing and Economic Development; Capital Facilities; Municipal Services and Transportation; and Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources.

Specifically, the study intends to accomplish the following:

Provide an overview of Northampton's historic resources, including maps of historic growth patterns and illustrations of major categories to be considered for protection.

Summarize methods for protection of historic resources.

**Propose Goals and Objectives for Historic Preservation** including priorities for preservation, and a timeline for implementation of specific goals and objectives for historic preservation.

Provide a model explaining steps for evaluating one historic area - Elm Street.

**The key to effective preservation is planning on the local level.** Threats to historic preservation include, but are not limited to: neglect and delayed maintenance, uncontrolled or uninformed development which intrudes upon or destroys historic resources, inappropriate renovation, and lack of information about and planning for what is historically and culturally significant in a community. Without information of historically significant elements, public support, and careful planning, all threats are likely to become reality.

## **CONTEXT: NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

Located in northern Hampshire County in western Massachusetts, Northampton is bordered by the towns of Easthampton, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Hatfield, and Hadley. The Connecticut River forms the eastern border of the city, and the Mill River bisects the city on a northwest-southeast axis.

The city encompasses 27.91 square miles (17,868.135 square acres) and has a population of 30,384 in 1990. The population is concentrated in the eastern portion of the city, in the region between the Connecticut and Mill Rivers.

Located within the city are several hamlet or village-like communities known as Florence, Leeds, Bay State, West Farms and Laurel Park, as well as substantial regions of less developed agricultural or wooded land - mostly in northern and western Northampton.

Most major modern roads generally follow the courses of the Connecticut and Mill Rivers, and are improvements of much earlier thoroughfares.

## **HISTORIC GROWTH PATTERNS**

The seven time periods established by the Massachusetts Historical Commission are used to show Northampton's historic wealth, and to conform with the established framework for review of a city's historic resources. The seven periods begin with native culture and colonization and conclude in the era of World War II.

**Contact Period 1520 - 1620**

**Plantation Period 1620 - 1675**

**Colonial Period 1675 - 1775**

**Federal Period 1775 - 1830**

**Early Industrial Period 1830 - 1870**

**Late Industrial Period 1870 - 1915**

**Early Modern Period 1915 - 1940**

Over the years, Northampton has been the stage for a number of notable events and people in American history. Northampton is unusual in having remnants or artifacts of the past from all seven time periods used by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The following maps show generalized growth patterns for Northampton, and are not to be interpreted as conclusive in establishing community growth. Some older neighborhoods may have been populated for centuries, but have few or no existing remnants of earlier settlement periods, other than road patterns.

### **Contact Period**

Inhabited by Native Americans for approximately 8,000 years, and originally known as Nonotuck, meaning "Midst of the River". The site had established communities with log structures and was favored for the fertile floodplains of the Connecticut River, abundant game and fish, and river transportation. A series of contemporary roads and streets - such as Elm Street/Route 9 - follow the routes of known or probable Native American trails. A portion of Park Hill Road exists as an intact Native trail - leading to Clear Falls Pond. Colonists traveled up the Connecticut River to settle in 1654.

According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, there were extensive Native American settlements in the Connecticut River floodplain. They suggest that there were campsites along Clark Brook, Broad Brook and the Mill River (primarily sites for hunting and fishing). Fortified villages were located at Nonotuck and Fort Hill.



## **Plantation Period, 1620 - 1675**

The core of the Plantation Period settlement was in the region occupied today by downtown Northampton: Bridge/Market/King/Pleasant/Main/Hawley/South/Elm and Prospect Streets.

Along the west bank of the Connecticut River, Plantation Period agricultural land divisions are still marked by a network of dirt roads - such as Walnut Trees Path, Old Rainbow Road, and First Square Road - dividing contemporary fields. The field divisions lay outside the fence-enclosed village compound, and consisted of approximately 16 acres each. Bridge Street Cemetery, which contains completely legible gravestones dating from 1687, was established in this period.

**Historic Example:** In 1675, the previously harmonious relationship between the Native Americans and the Puritan settlers soured, and six Northamptonites were killed in several attacks by Natives.

## **Colonial Period, 1675 - 1775**

During the Colonial Period most of the core of greater Northampton was settled and divided into homelots. The core was loosely defined by a circle including present day Round Hill, Stoddard Street, Woodmont Road, Lincoln Avenue, Pomeroy Terrace, Pound Lane/Smith Street, and the Smith College Campus. West Farms was also divided into homesteads with the establishment of Glendale/West Farms/Sylvester/Kennedy Roads.

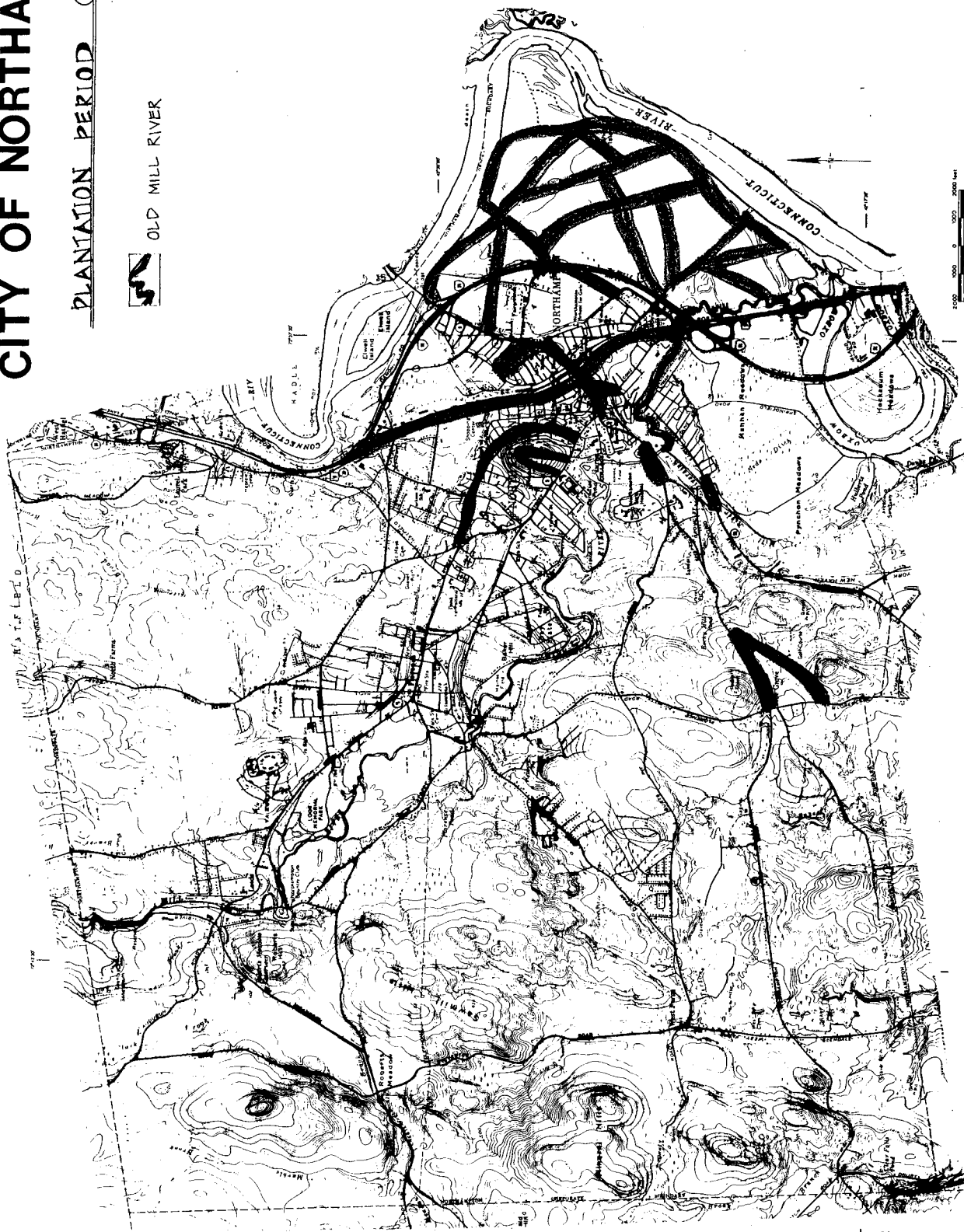
**Historic Example:** In the 18th century the fiery preacher Jonathan Edwards, often considered the greatest American philosopher of the era, was an instrumental figure in the Great Awakening religious fervor in the colonies. He lived and preached in what is now downtown Northampton. The site of his original church is commemorated in a modern church on Main Street named after him.

# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

PLANTATION PERIOD (1620 - 1675)



OLD MILL RIVER

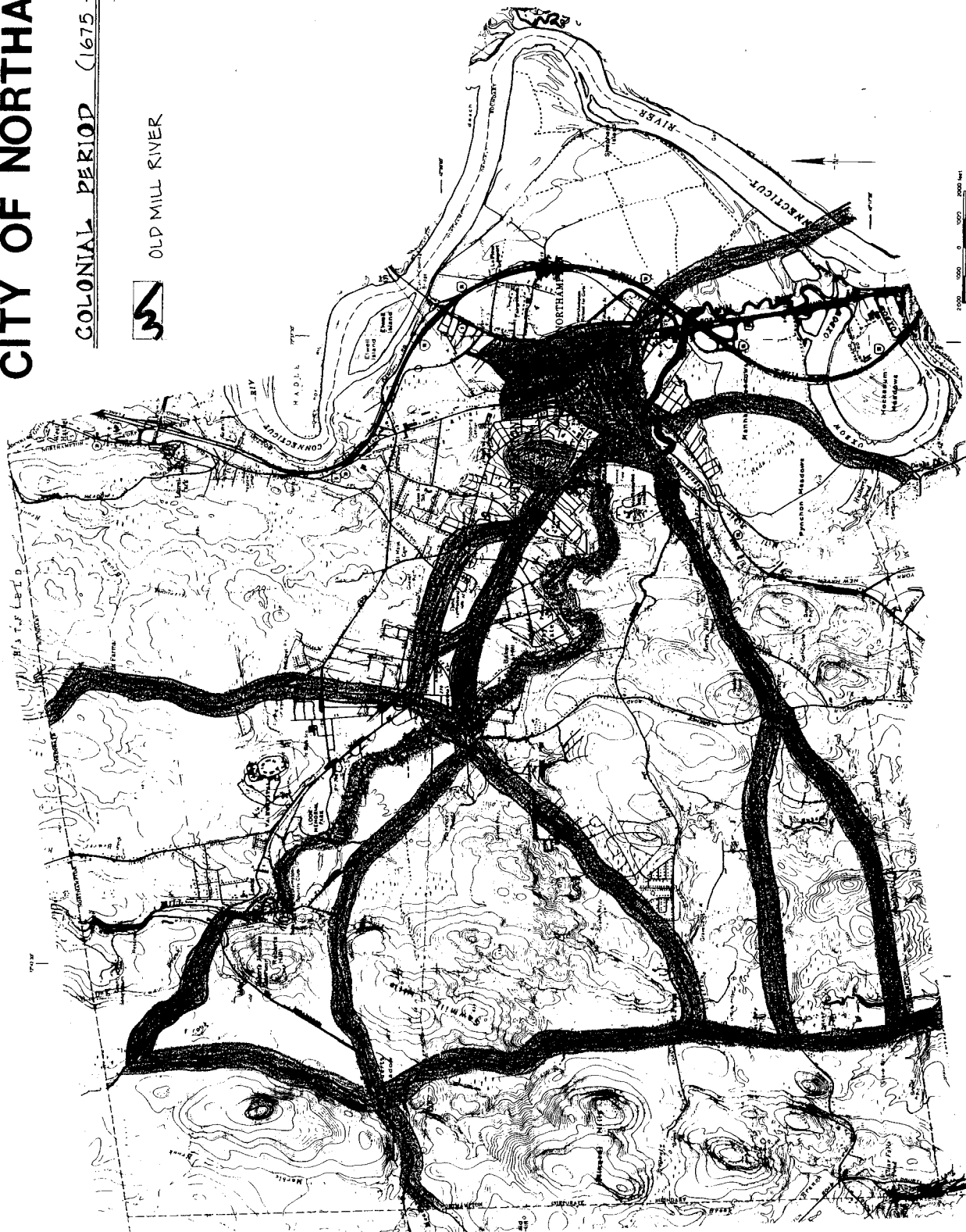


# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)



OLD MILL RIVER



## **Federal Period, 1775 - 1830**

The Federal Period witnessed the building of Burts Pit Road, a bridge across the Connecticut River to Hadley at Bridge Street, further residential infill in the Bradford/Crosby/Marshall Streets area, as well as south of Smith Street/Pound Lane. Community cores were begun in Leeds and Bay State.

**Historic Example:** Shays Rebellion, the first armed civil disobedience of the infant American republic, began in Northampton in 1786, when 1,500 disgruntled farmers rallied against creditors and judges threatening to foreclose their farms and imprison them for debts.

The Round House (1829) at 32 Conz Street is a notable architectural experiment of the Federal Period.

## **Early Industrial Period, 1830 - 1870**

Most new expansion in the Early Industrial Period occurred in Leeds and between Elm/Nonotuck and Locust Streets in Florence. The original Northampton State Hospital and railroad lines across the Oxbow to Hadley were also built in the Early Industrial Period.

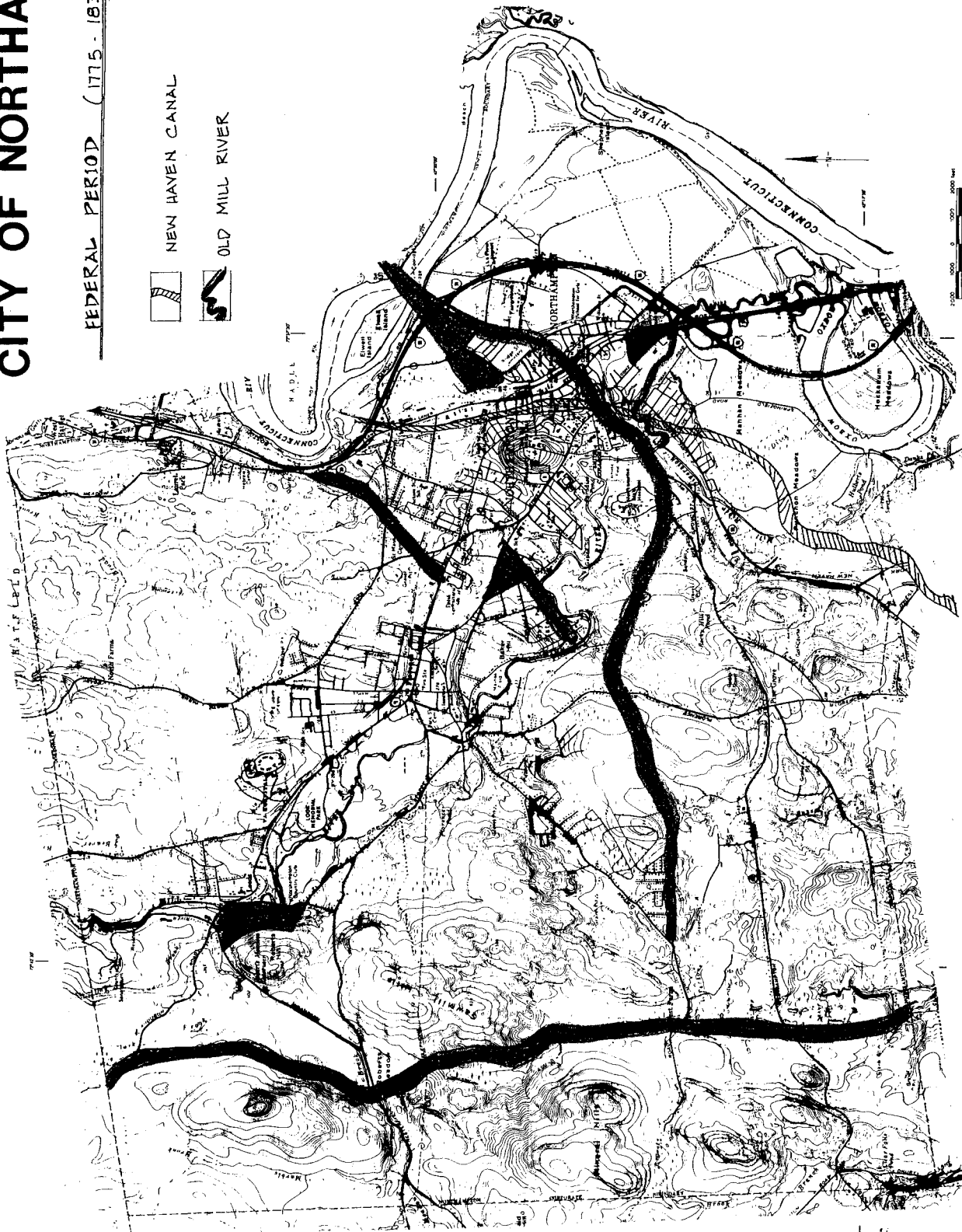
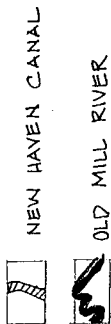
**Historic Example:** In the 19th century, innovations in weaving technology for mechanized looms led to a commercial and social boom in Northampton, spawning several local fortunes and subsequent philanthropies. Leeds serves as an excellent example of development of a district as a result of technological innovations. The Mill River district in Leeds developed early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a result of utilization of the power supplied by the water. The first mill, a sawmill was constructed in 1800, and in 1808 a cotton mill was added and in 1812 a woolen mill.

The Bay State Village industrial area is an example of the Early Industrial Period. This district documents the growth of this period's small hardware and agricultural industry.

The Early Industrial Period provides one of the most outstanding periods of architectural expression in Northampton's history. The most unusual philanthropy, founded by a group of idealistic investors including Samuel Hill was The Association of Education and Industry, known most often as "The Community". The Community provided employment to its members in silk factories and associated mulberry tree groves, and sought to enhance their moral, literary, and scientific education. The Community included women and members of all ages in its education program. As a center for abolitionist, suffragist, and feminist advocacy, The Community attracted speakers such as Frederick Douglass, and was the home for several years of the former slave Sojourner Truth.

# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

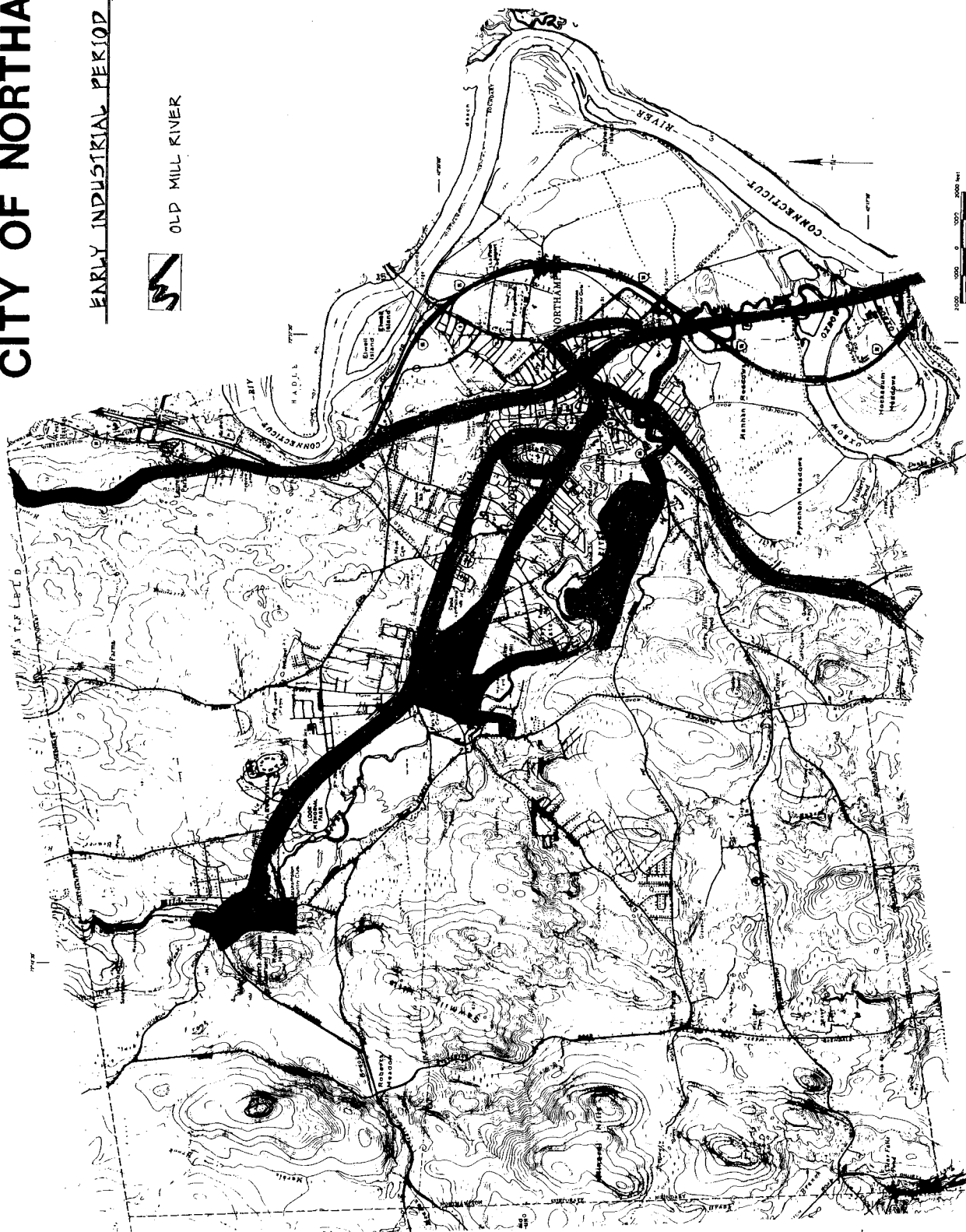


# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)



OLD MILL RIVER



## **Late Industrial Period, 1870 - 1915**

The Methodist Campgrounds, now Laurel Park, and suburban expansion along the South Street axis from Lyman Road, and in Bay State north of Riverside Drive were the focal points of growth in the Late Industrial Period.

**Historic Example:** In 1876 the Northampton National Bank, founded in 1837, was robbed of \$1.25 million in cash, bonds, certificates, and securities, the biggest heist in the United States until the late 20th century.

The William F. Pratt-designed City hall (1850) and the core of Smith College campus (1870's) are probably the two most prominent reminders of the Late Industrial period.

## **Early Modern Period, 1915 - 1940**

The Early Modern Period saw most new development occurring along King Street north from Church Street, east of Round Hill, and north of Prospect Street to Warburton Way. An airstrip was also constructed north of Old Ferry Road during this period.

**Historic Example:** In the 20th century, Northampton became the adopted home of Calvin Coolidge, who held virtually every elected office, serving as City Mayor, and Governor of Massachusetts, as well as President of the United States. Coolidge spent his retirement in Northampton. His former home is at 19-21 Massasoit Street.

The expansive facilities of the United States Veterans Administration Hospital were opened in 1924, following World War I.

# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)



OLD MILL RIVER



SCALE  
0 1000 2000 feet



# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915 - 1940)



## IS PRESERVATION NEEDED?

Northampton is growing and changing, its population increasing almost 1% from 1988 - 1990 (27,920 vs. 30,384). If Northampton is to remain the distinctive community it presently is, protection of historic resources must become a priority in the city planning process.

While saving all buildings and sites is neither possible, nor necessarily desirable, each significant loss diminishes the community's connections to its roots. The loss of some buildings and sites is especially painful because of the prominent focus they provided for the community over time.

In 1873 - 1874, after the original Association of Education and history in Florence disbanded, an idealistic outgrowth of the group known as The Free Congregational Society (later known as the Unitarian Society of Florence) built a great auditorium which accommodated 700 people in the center of Florence. Members named the building Cosmian Hall, after the Greek word (Kosinos (order, honor, and universal brotherhood). Popular meetings at Cosmian Hall featured notable speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederic Douglas, Louisa May Alcott, and William Lloyd Garrison. Cosmian Hall became too expensive to maintain the Unitarian Society of Florence moved to smaller quarters, selling the original building. Eventually the building became the property of the Northampton YMCA which demolished it in 1948. People who remember the presence of Cosmian Hall on Main Street consider that the community of Florence lost its visual center when the building was demolished, and the associated history vanished in ephemeral clouds of brick dust.

The original survey of historic resources in Northampton, begun in 1970, included buildings which have since undergone significant renovation. Sometimes the results have been substantial contributions to historic restoration and preservation efforts. Other times, a building whose architectural and historical significance could have been preserved through local historic district guidelines for exterior renovation has been rendered architecturally bland.

## SUMMARY OF KEY HISTORIC RESOURCES

A review of city histories at Forbes Library, the resources of the Northampton Historical Commission and Massachusetts Historical Commission, and observation resulted in the identification of nine of the most important categories of historic resources for Northampton. These nine general categories distinguish Northampton from other communities, and thus may be considered priorities most essential to the city's unique character.

Archeological sites associated with the Nonotuck Indians, and prior native peoples and the earliest settlers.

The Banks of the Connecticut River in Northampton, Easthampton and Hadley are deemed to have been a core area of Native American settlement. For further information see the Massachusetts Historical Commission publication, Historical and Archeological Resources of the Connecticut River Valley (Reprinted, 1988). Also, there is a great deal of as yet unexplored potential for historical archeological research in areas that were occupied during the Plantation and Colonial periods and subsequently abandoned.

**Houses of considerable antiquity.** Approximately 56 to 80 houses in Northampton predate 1830, and are important illustrations of the history of the colonial and early republican eras. Several houses such as the Higbee House on West Street, and the Parsons House on Bridge Street purportedly contain sections dating from the 1650's; other houses such as "The Manse" (1686) build by Reverend Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards, also date from the 17th century.



**Example:**

The Higbee House on West Street, a portion of which is said to date from 1654, the year of Northampton's colonial settlement.

**Commercial, municipal, and institutional buildings of the 19th century.** The downtown area of Northampton is a veritable museum of 19th century American public architecture, and is particularly strong in examples of Gothic Revival buildings.



**Example:**

A grouping of 19th century commercial buildings on the north side of Pleasant Street lies within a National Register Historic District.

**Buildings designed by Northampton born and based architects.** The quantity and quality of buildings (mostly houses) designed by such local architects as Thomas Platt, Isaac Damon, C.H. Jones, E.C. Gardner, Roswell F. Putnam, and especially William F. Pratt is unusual, and noteworthy, for a community the size of Northampton. Italianate and Gothic Revival houses are especially significant.



**Example:**

Northampton's most prolific home-born architect, William F. Pratt, designed the distinctive 1850 City Hall, and...



**Example:**

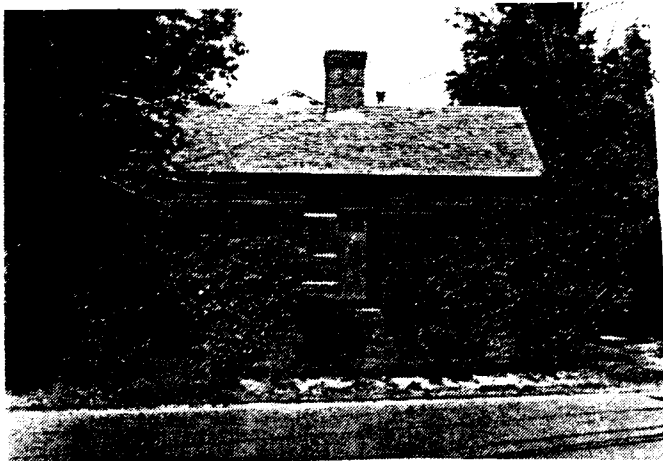
also designed six residences on Elm Street, where his buildings contribute significantly to the character of the street.

**Nineteenth century mill buildings and associated workers' housing.** Concentrations of 19th century textile, cutlery, and machinery mills in Leeds, Bay State, and Florence, and the modest worker's housing provided by mill owners or built by the workers constitute unusually well preserved enclaves of architecture of the early American industrial revolution. Several Federal Period worker's cottages on Audubon Road in Leeds are particularly rare.



**Example:**

An unusually ornate 19th century mill building in Bay State is well preserved,



**Example:**

as is a Federal Period central chimney homestead on Audubon Road in Leeds.

**Smith College Campus.** The only known college campus in which all original major buildings were designed by the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns: College Hall (1874), Gateway House (1874), Hatfield House (1876), Washburn House (1878), Hubbard House (1879), Old Hillyer Hall (1881), Pierce Hall (1882), and the present Alumnae Gymnasium (1890); Smith College also owns a number of significant former residences and traditional educational buildings of architectural and historical significance, such as the Higbee House on West Street, where the first wedding Northampton is said to have taken place in 1655. The Smith College campus is a major component of the unique character of the town.



**Example:**

Smith College Campus consists of a core of original buildings by the firm Peabody and Stearns, as well as numerous other important buildings.

**Iron bridges of the 19th century.** Three 19th century iron bridges, the "Hotel Bridge" in Leeds, the Clement Street Bridge in Bay State, and the railroad truss bridge across the Connecticut River to Hadley and Amherst are well-preserved examples of early engineering technology.

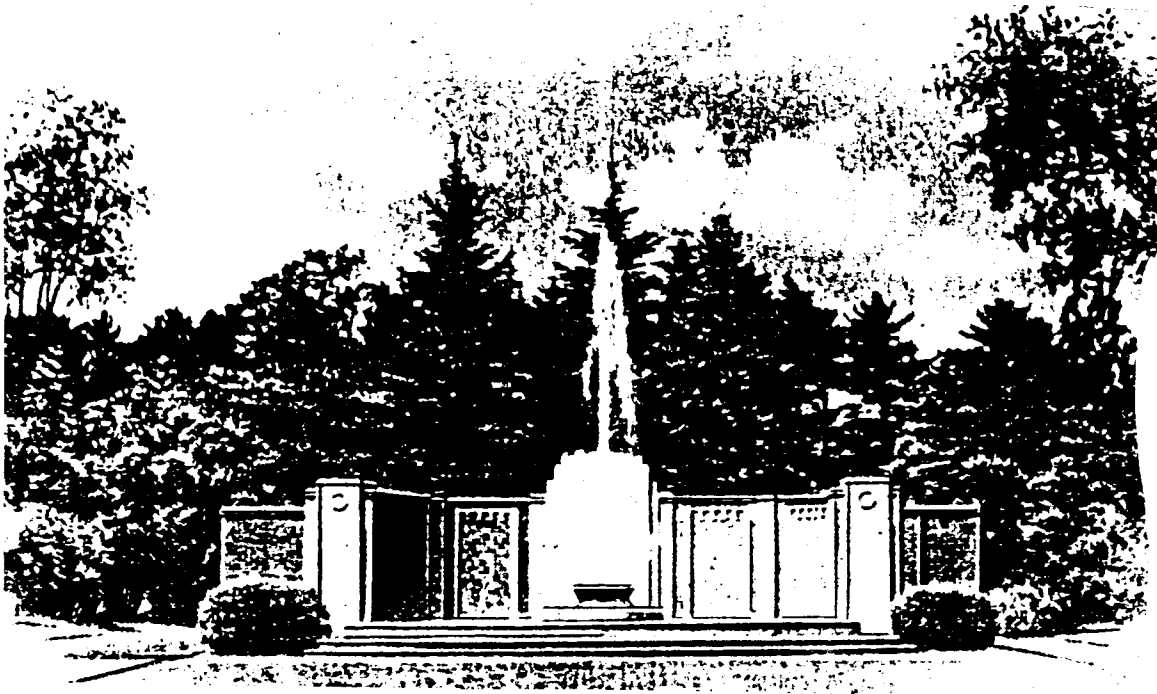


**Example:**

The "Hotel Bridge" in Leeds is the oldest iron bridge in Massachusetts.

**Burial Grounds:** Northampton contains a number of significant burial grounds. The oldest of the nine cemeteries in Northampton is the Bridge Street Cemetery which dates back to 1659. This cemetery contains excellent examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century gravestones.

**Parks:** Pulaski Park, formerly known as the Main Street Park, was opened to the public in 1908. Look Park, the largest park in the Town, was opened to the public in 1930. Although privately owned, Childs Park was used extensively by the residents of Northampton before 1950 when it became an official park. Along with smaller public green spaces such as Trinity Row Park in Florence, these parks are important to the Town for their historic associations as well as the visual quality of the streetscape.





**Sites associated with famous people or events in American or local history.** Northampton contains a number of sites with historical significance and interest due to associations with notable people and/or events such as Calvin Coolidge, Jonathan Edwards, Shays Rebellion, the textile industry innovations of the 19th century, The Association of Education and Industry, Sojourner Truth, and the artists who performed at the Academy of Music.



The house at 67 Park Street in Florence was the home of Sojourner Truth, the 19th century abolitionist.

**Several well preserved 19th century agricultural and designed pastoral style landscapes.** Regions of Audubon Road, West Farms Road, and North Farms Road are fine examples of relatively undisturbed 19th century rural/agricultural landscapes. The city-owned property used by Smith Vocational High School is also a valuable agricultural landscape located largely "in town". The grounds of the former Northampton State Hospital are an expansive and intact designed landscape in the pastoral style, surrounding the original mid 19th century hospital buildings.



The view along West Farms Road of a well preserved 19th century landscape, includes the 1835 West Farms Chapel.

## STATUS OF PRESERVATION EFFORTS IN NORTHAMPTON

**Preservation Efforts Well Begun.** Inventory work on buildings of historical and/or architectural importance in Northampton was begun in 1970 by the Northampton Historical Society, and which recorded 36 buildings: mostly colonial era structures. The Northampton Historical Commission was created in 1973, and at the behest of the Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission increased the inventory to slightly over 250 structures. The inventory has since been expanded and 1,112 buildings, structures, and sites are now included. Little inventory work has been done since 1980, and in the interim some of the structures of importance that were listed have been demolished or altered substantially.

Individual and district properties listed with the National Register of Historic Places in Northampton are:

- Calvin Coolidge House, 19-21 Massasoit Street
- The Manse, 54 Prospect Street
- Dimmock Estate, Front Street at Florence Road in Leeds
- Smith Alumnae Gymnasium, Smith College Campus at Green Street
- West Farms Chapel, West Farms Road
- Academy of Music, 274 Main Street
- 8-22 Graves Avenue (8 properties)
- Fort Hill Historic District, South Street (7 properties)
- Veterans Administration Medical Center, North Main Street, Leeds (47 properties)
- Northampton Downtown Historic District (301 properties)
- Northampton Downtown Historic District Extension (13 properties)

Much work has already been done.

**However, of the 390 National Register sites in Northampton, only two buildings - the 1835 West Farms Chapel, and the 1890 Academy of Music - have permanent preservation restrictions attached to their deeds.** The Gas Works Round House, The Court House, the Old Post Office, and The Manse have more limited preservation restrictions. Changes ranging from minor alteration to demolition are presently allowed under present zoning for all other listed and inventoried structures and sites in Northampton.

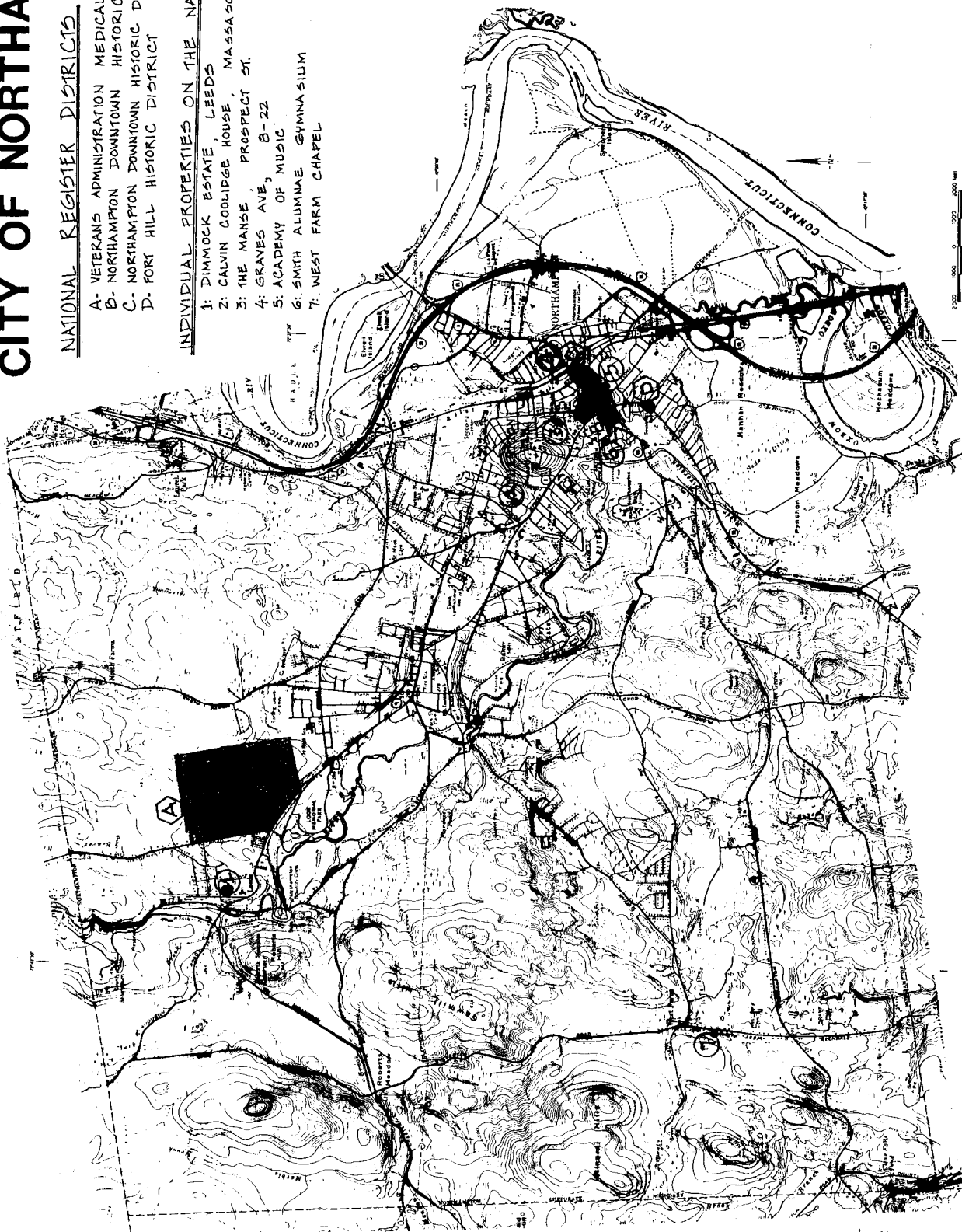
# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

## NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICTS

- A- VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER
- B- NORTHAMPTON DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT
- C- NORTHAMPTON DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION
- D- FORT HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

## INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

- 1: DIMMOCK ESTATE, LEEDS
- 2: CALVIN COOLIDGE HOUSE, MASSADOIT ST.
- 3: THE MANSE, PROSPECT ST.
- 4: GRAVES AVE, B-22
- 5: ACADEMY OF MUSIC
- 6: SMITH ALUMNAE GYMNASIUM
- 7: WEST FARM CHAPEL



## **ALMOST ALL HISTORIC RESOURCES IN NORTHAMPTON ARE UNPROTECTED**

Significant concentrations of noteworthy historic resources exist in the following areas of Northampton, but are not listed as historic sites or districts, or protected by any form of preservation restrictions. Examples are given.

West Farms Road - cemetery, Federal Period schoolhouse, and well preserved agricultural landscape.

Village core and Audubon Road in Leeds - 19th century mill buildings, worker's housing, iron bridge, and agricultural landscape.

North Farms Road - 18th/19th century agricultural landscape.

Laurel Park - 19th century Queen Anne and Stick style cottages.

Pomeroy Terrace - neighborhood of colonial and local architect-designed residences. A former premier neighborhood in Northampton.

South Street/Conz Street - 18th and 19th century houses, 19th century commercial buildings.

Smith College Campus - major buildings designed by Peabody and Stearns, and collection of notable former residences.

Round Hill and Elm Street - houses, apartment and academic buildings, and churches of architectural and historical significance, dating from 17th to 20th century.

Bay State - 19th century mill buildings, workers' housing, and iron bridge.

Florence - 19th century mill buildings, millworker and middle class housing, and institutional buildings.

Inventories for such resources as scenic roads, cemeteries, parks, landscapes, streetscapes, and European-American archeological sites are largely in preliminary stages. A proposal for scenic roads designation put forth in 1975 was not acted upon by the City Council.

Private efforts and public concern have helped preserve much, but until recently have not been organized.

**SUMMARY OF DESIGNATIONS AND ASSOCIATED METHODS  
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION:**

**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL**

Methods for historic preservation are administered at three levels of government: federal, state, and local. In Massachusetts, the most effective, most flexible preservation regulations are those instituted at the local level when each community decides how to best preserve the resources it values.

For further information about all three levels of designation and associated preservation methods contact:

Mark Verkennis, Local Preservation Planner  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
80 Boylston Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116  
(617) 727-8470

or  
Preservation Planner  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
26 Central Street  
West Springfield, MA 01089  
(413) 781-6045

**Federal Designations and Methods**

**National Historic Landmarks** (36 CFR 60): The national listing of sites, structures and districts of national, state, or local significance historically and/or culturally which should be preserved-designated by the Department of the Interior through the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Listing with the National Register has limited value as a preservation tool, functioning more as a vehicle for educating the public and helping to instill pride in a community. National Register listing does trigger-- Mass. Historical Commission review for federally or state funded projects. Because listing with the National Register is time-consuming, typically taking approximately two years after a proposed designation is submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for review, it is not an efficient method to use when preservation concerns are immediate. Only properties listed on the National Register are eligible for the full twenty percent investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties under the Historic Preservation Certification program. A 10% tax credit is available, however, for the rehabilitation of income-producing buildings built before 1936, but not listed with the National Register.

Environmental review, which includes review of impact on cultural resources, mandated under Federal "Section 106" for all federally funded construction or renovation projects which will affect designated historic sites, is another benefit of listing with the National Register. Environmental review also applies to properties not listed, but believed to be eligible for listing.

Listing with the National Register is an honor and can be a useful way to generate publicity and educate the local population about the significance of a site or structure when local support for preservation is weak.

**Determination of Eligibility** (36 CFR 63): This designation occurs for sites of local, state, or national significance determined eligible for listing, but not yet listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Such a designation is made by the Secretary of the Interior when during the course of a federally funded project sites are determined to be historically or culturally significant, or where property owners object to listing on the National Register.

#### **STATE DESIGNATIONS AND METHODS**

**Massachusetts Historic Landmarks** (M.G.L.Ch.9,ss27) (program inactive): Listing of structures of state significance designated by the Massachusetts Historical Commission; all are subject to preservation restrictions.

**Massachusetts Archeological Landmarks** (M.G.L.ch.9,ss27): Listing of sites of state significance as designated by the Massachusetts Historical Commission; all are subject to preservation restrictions.

**The State Register of Historic Places** lists all properties in Massachusetts which have any of eight forms of preservation designation - federal, state, or local. Inclusion on the State Register ensures review of impact on historic resources by the Massachusetts Historical Commission for all projects using state funds.

**Environmental Review** allows for environmental review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission of natural and cultural resources included in State Register listings for any project utilizing state funds. Environmental review requires the exploration of alternatives which eliminate, minimize, or mitigate negative effects of a project on historic buildings or sites, but may not absolutely prevent their occurrence.

## LOCAL DESIGNATIONS AND METHODS

**Local landmarks** (various local ordinances): Properties of local, state, or national significance as designated by local governments.

**Local Historic Districts** (M.G.L.Ch.40C and special legislative acts): Properties of local, state, or national significance as designated by local governments.

Local Historic Districts offer the strongest, and also the most flexible protection controls in Massachusetts. Tailored to suit the importance and needs of each individual district, Local Historic District restrictions can range from strict to relaxed. A completed, thorough survey of local historic resources and clear definition of preservation priorities are the base for establishing the type and extent of protection measures to be applied to each site.

**Scenic road designation** may be applied to any unnumbered route or road that is not a state highway. Designation as a scenic road is useful in protection of streetscapes and roadsides of historic and aesthetic importance. What constitutes a scenic road is undefined by legislation, and consequently up to the community to evaluate. The law regulates but does not prevent the cutting of trees or destruction of more than 15 linear feet of stone wall during the performance of repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving of the public right of way. This does not mean that only roads featuring both trees and stone walls are eligible for designation as scenic. The scenic road designation is most effective when used in conjunction with the Public Shade Tree Law (M.G.L.Ch.87), which protects roadside trees at all times, not merely while roadside work is occurring. The designation permits the community to use state funding for road improvements, while freeing it from the requirement of adhering to state highway standards if those standards are inappropriate.

**Demolition delay ordinances** are applied to special groups of buildings throughout a community, such as all buildings listed with the National Register or included in the local survey, and allow review of preservation options for a specified period of time, such as six months. Demolition delay ordinances do not prevent demolition, but do increase the likelihood of a property's preservation by preventing hasty action without review.

**Site Plan Review** allows review of proposed development plans by a historical commission for impact on natural or cultural resources in the project area. By incorporating historic preservation concerns in the criteria for site plan review, potentially adverse effects of development can be eliminated or ameliorated.

**Chapter 40A Zoning** regulates development of a property by designating property use, bulk, height, setbacks, materials, lot density, open space, parking, and lot coverage of buildings. Two effective methods of using Chapter 40A for historic preservation are cluster and overlay zoning.

**Cluster zoning** is particularly useful in the preservation of historic, cultural, and natural landscapes. By limiting the development of a subdivision to a portion of a property, and requiring conservation of preservation restrictions for the remainder of the property to be donated to the community, the zoning preserves historically significant open space. Conservation of historically important landscapes, standing buildings in their original settings, or archeological sites is especially successful using cluster zoning ordinances.

**Overlay zoning districts**, which exist in Northampton already, can be applied to regions of historic preservation concern, such as a local historic district, and control development contiguous to a site or region of historic or cultural significance by requiring new development to be screened from historic sites.

**Preservation Restriction** (M.G.L.Ch.184,ss.31-33): For properties of national, state, or local significance; restrictions can be held by any governmental body or charitable trust, and run in perpetuity, or for a specified number of years. Preservation Restrictions are placed on a property deed by the owner. Income and estate tax benefits may accrue to property owners who donate perpetual restrictions to a qualified non-profit organization, such as a local historical commission. When preservation restrictions but not the deed for a property are held by a local historical commission, qualified review of any proposed changes to significant features of the property and subsequent preservation are assured, without removing the property from the tax rolls or adding maintenance costs to a municipal budget.

**Private efforts for preservation** are potentially of the greatest significance, and should be encouraged to the fullest degree, through education, and publicity about historic preservation.



## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Overall Goal:** Historic preservation in Northampton becomes a key component of future planning efforts, promoting the preservation, restoration, and adaptive re-use of historically and culturally significant structures, districts, and landscapes in the city.

### **Goal: Inventory of historic resources**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Evaluate item by item our present building inventory, the inventory of the Bridge Street cemetery, of the Northampton Mental Hospital buildings, the list of scenic roads and bridges, and our survey of archeological sites. Rank every item within them according to National Register criteria. (Copy appended).
2. Complete and update the inventories as needed. Remove sites and buildings destroyed since original surveys. Note changes in ownership and any substantial recent modifications.
3. Compile further inventories of parks, historical open spaces, streetscapes and evaluate, item by item.
4. Make the building survey maps more useful by color-coding according to the seven time periods used in Massachusetts classification. Show concentrations of growth from different eras. Apply the same method to all historical resources.
5. Establish repositories for the inventories: City Hall, Forbes Library, Historic Northampton, Northampton High School, Smith College Library.

### **Goal: Provide community education and increase public awareness.**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Continue and expand the House-Dating Program. Set specific goals for publicly displayed dates; -the pre-1800 houses; later buildings already placarded; other most highly evaluated 1800-1900 buildings.
2. Continue the program of Annual Preservation Week Awards for Preservation/Restoration, emphasizing the public nomination process.
3. Encourage and coordinate other observances of Preservation Week and Historic Month, for example, with Historic Northampton, with the primary and secondary schools, with the newspapers.
4. Encourage and coordinate educational projects that foster appreciation of local historical resources; walking

tours, school curricula, signs and markers for places of historic importance, educational displays in school and public buildings.

5. Encourage and coordinate the preparation of maps of all significant historical resources (except archeological) for use by City Boards and by the public. Maintain records of their location, and check regularly on their availability.

**Goal: Expand and reinforce the role of the Historical Commission in City Government.**

**Objectives:**

1. On the basis of the evaluations, set priorities for sites and districts designated for preservation. Make these priorities known to the City Council, City Boards (especially the Building Inspector's Office), and to the public.
2. In Historical Commission members strive for representation from diverse sectors of the community.
3. Prepare an annual report on the work of the commission and on the status of preservation in Northampton.

**Goal: Preserve historic materials**

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage and coordinate the maintaining and expanding of the City's historical collections. Have information gathered which can make possible a single guide to all that is presently in the collections at Historic Northampton, the Florence Civic Center/Historical Society, Forbes Library (including the Coolidge collection).
2. Encourage and coordinate the collecting and compiling of oral histories by the Council of Aging, the schools, Historic Northampton and others.

**Goal: Use growth policy and planning as a tool to prevent irreversible damage to the City's heritage.**

**Objectives:**

1. Promote understanding and support for an eventual Local Historic District Ordinance.
2. Draft some norms for demolition delay, tailored to the local situation, and promote understanding and support for some such possibility of community rescue operations.
3. Promote support for designation of some local scenic roads.

## ELM STREET AS A MODEL

One of the most historically interesting streets in Northampton, Elm Street displays remnants of all eras of Northampton's past. The street course was originally a Native American pathway, and was used as a thoroughfare by the subsequent Puritan settlers. Elm Street is historically and architecturally noteworthy for the one mile distance beginning at the confluence of Main, Elm, and West Streets to the juncture of Elm and North Elm Streets. At the head of the street, College Hall of Smith College, one of a core of original campus buildings designed by the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns, sits across from the Higbee House, reportedly the site of the first wedding in Northampton in 1655.

The seven-color method (for the seven time periods used by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to evaluate a community's history) of mapping the city's historic resources, with notations about known or assumed building dates, architectural and/or historical merit, and architectural attribution, illuminated several associations not apparent from reading the inventory.

In the Bedford/Prospect Streets area are four closely clustered Federal properties, all with architectural and historic merit - elements of the Smith College pastiche - and all within one block of one Plantation/Colonial Period, and two Colonial Period properties.

Another fine grouping exists in the Crescent and Franklin Streets neighborhood, with one Colonial, two Federal Period, four Early Industrial Period, seven Late Industrial Period, and two Early Modern Period properties - two designed by William F. Pratt, and one by R.F. Putnam and Son.

When both sides of the street are considered together for total historic streetscape content, 77.4% of all frontage on Elm Street is associated with properties inventoried by the Northampton Historical Commission. A breakdown of the periods illustrated, and their net contributions to the streetscape are:

Contact Period: The general streetcourse of Elm Street

Colonial Period: Two properties; 1.7% of streetscape

Federal Period: Six properties; 8.5% of streetscape

Early Industrial Period: Nine properties; 9.3% of streetscape

Late Industrial Period: Thirty-four properties; 38% of streetscape

Early Modern Period: Eight properties; 14.7% of streetscape

Modern Period: Three properties; 5.2% of streetscape

Six properties were designed by William F. Pratt (6.3% of streetscape), and one by R.F. Putnam and Son, for a total streetscape contribution of 7.4% for Northampton-born and based architects.

Twenty uninventoried properties, and street intersections total 22.6% of streetscape.

Steps that could be taken by the Northampton Historical Commission, and the Historic Districts Study Committee for the preservation of the historic resources of Elm Street include:

Propose designation of Elm Street as a local historic district.

Submit nomination for all or part of Elm Street as a National Register Historic District.

Locate signs or markers to describe historic and architectural merit of buildings on Elm Street.

Assist in the formation of an Elm Street neighborhood historical association.

Include Elm Street in a revised historic Northampton walking tour.

Publicly honor a particularly successful property restoration or renovation on Elm Street.

Adopt bylaws and zoning ordinances to reduce attrition of historic resources and intrusion of contextually inappropriate new construction.

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